1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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of Units I and II and made their wives available for redistribution. The working of the Tiwi system made this possibility unlikely. Unsuccessful junior elders could not expect to step into the shoes of successful senior elders merely by outliving them; nor could one rise to power in the gerontocratic system merely by living past fifty-five. What was necessary was age *plus* ability, and the time to demonstrate the ability was in one's thirties. If it was not demonstrated and recognized by then, a man could not forge ahead in his middle forties and early fifties, for by then it was too late. This fact gave a certain cyclical quality to the transfer of influence in Tiwi. The influence of successful senior elders, to the extent that such an intangible thing was transferable at all, tended to skip a decade and bypass the men currently in the junior elder category in favor of the men in the current "young operator" category. Since Ki-in-kumi was already quite old, there was in 1929 a great deal of political maneuvering going on in Malau and elsewhere in anticipation of his death, and it was clear that the people most likely to profit by his death and the redistribution of his twelve resident wives (one-third of all resident wives in the band) were the men aged from thirty-two to forty-two such as Padimo, Boya, Summit, and Gitjara, all of whom were jockeying for position to take advantage of the death of any old man, especially such a wealthy elder as Ki-in-kumi. Some of the widows would undoubtedly remarry into other bands, but these younger Malauila, living with or near the old man's establishment, were already taking advantage of their strategic location to make some preliminary deals and marriage arrangements for the old man's widows even before his death. Neither Padimo, as Ki-in-kumi's son-in-law, nor Boya, as his nominal "son," could themselves marry any of the widows, but as resident members of his establishment and the only two men so situated, each was in an excellent spot to act as an honest broker in the disposal of Ki-in-kumi's large estate. Anybody interested in obtaining a widow or two at the death of Ki-in-kumi was well advised to have a few quiet words with either Padimo or Boya well ahead of time. Both of them had wives who lived and worked every day alongside Ki-in-kumi's womenfolk and thus they each had ideal communication systems to the women's side of the band. This was why they had held off setting up their own separate establishments though they were both married men. Neither were "heirs" of Ki-in-kumi in any strict Western use of that word, but it was obvious that it was their careers that would be promoted and their spheres of influence that would be enhanced by the death of Ki-in-kumi. The junior elders, all approaching or past the age of fifty with only small establishments and small spheres of influence, were being bypassed in the transfer of the old man's assets.

Every Tiwi anxious to obtain a Ki-in-kumi widow recognized the strategic positions of Padimo and Boya; the problem was to decide which broker to retain, since the positions of the two men in relation to Ki-in-kumi were so different. For the past four or five years Padimo had been the right-hand man and trusted lieutenant and undoubtedly it was he upon whom Ki-in-kumi was relying to carry out his own wishes about the distribution of his widows. We said earlier that old men found it difficult to control the remarriage of their

6: Hart E-5 (1928-1930) 1954 OI20 Tiwi OI20

159 admitted the charge along the age-old line of "the woman tempted me," Louis always faced his accusers silently, sullenly, almost disinterestedly. He never excused himself, never alibied. On the other hand he never gloried in or boasted of his sexual exploits, he merely gave the impression that he was completely disinterested in the whole procedure of argument and punishment and wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible. It was very evident that, despite his sexual reputation, he was not invested with any glamour nor did he excite any hero-worship on the part of the younger men. The role of Don Juan in some cultures can presumably be a role that leads to a successful seducer's being envied and even to some extent hero-worshipped by the young bloods, but this seems quite absent as a cultural possibility in Tiwi values. Successful young seducers never act publicly as if they were proud of themselves nor in any way show off or assume a "look how clever I am" manner. Absence of such behavior was very noticeable in others besides Louis, and certainly he never acted in such a way, despite his obvious suitability for such a role were it culturally available.

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In camp and during the periods of the collective life he was silent, gloomy and dour, frequently irritable, unfriendly and hostile to everybody. He was too young, in Tiwi terms, to rate a wife, but the policy of the Mission to discourage plural marriages had as its positive correlate the promotion of marriages for the wifeless young men and Louis was one of those who had obtained a wife through Mission manipulations. She died after a beating which Louis in one of his frequent fits of anger had administered to her, and while the natives never said so openly, they clearly agreed with the Mission's charges that Louis had murdered his wife. Thus accused to his face by the Mission, Louis shrugged his shoulders in his normal, indifferent way. In council he seldom spoke and what he said carried no weight. This, of course, may well have been due to his age as in Tiwi terms Louis at 31 or 32 was still a young man who should keep silent in the presence of his seniors. But it was very noticeable that even in the quick informal conferences between members of a party on the march involving such petty decisions as whether to camp at this waterhole or try and make the next one before nightfall, or in similar minor decision-making, Louis took no part. He listened silently to the debate, was very quick to foresee correctly what the decision was going to be as was evidenced by his starting off again by himself before the main party had realized where the consensus lay, but he apparently felt no urge to express aloud his own views on the issue. His actions showed that in his private analysis of the situation he was way ahead of most of the debaters but apparently his personal satisfactions came from correct anticipation of majority decision rather than from any desire to participate himself in decision-making. The same ability to listen, analyze what he heard, to act upon his own analysis but never to intervene actively was very noticeable in Louis' reaction to the accusations against him by the outraged husbands. An outraged husband usually begins his charges late at night when the camps are quiet. At such a time he begins to yell his accusations through the darkness at the top of his voice, naming the seducer,

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